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ABSTRACT

In light of the cable television and VCR revolution of the past few years which provides viewers with a greater variety of programs, a study examined the role that reruns play in network programming strategies and the profile of the audience that appreciates such programs. Subjects, 293 households (out of an original 730) in a medium-sized midwestern market, were surveyed in July 1986 concerning their television viewing habits. Results indicated that (1) those who frequently view television have a greater availability to watch more of all programs, including reruns; (2) those who are dissatisfied with summer TV programming watch fewer reruns than those who are satisfied, while those with college educations or high incomes also watch fewer reruns; and (3) frequent rerun viewers tend to be women, owners of videocassette recorders, frequent players of records, and heavy TV consumers, while those not so oriented tend to be high income individuals, men, those who are not satisfied with typical network summer programming, and those involved in alternative activities. (Thirty references are included.) (RS)

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NETWORK RERUN VIEWING IN THE AGE OF NEW PROGRAMMING SERVICES

By

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NETWORK RERUN VIEWING IN THE AGE OF NEW PROGRAMMING SERVICES

Introduction

With the advent of the home VCR revolution in the last half dozen years, viewers have not only freed themselves from the temporal tyranny of network and local programming schedules but also acquired additional flexibility and consumer sovereignty through the availability of prerecorded videotapes. While the enhanced penetration of cable and its growing maturity have further eroded aggregate network shares of the audience, the networks, individually and collectively, still dominate the television landscape and, according to A.C. Nielsen, when viewers use their VCRs to record, two-thirds of the programming is from network affiliated stations and, presumably, is network programming (20).

To the extent that the modern VCR allows viewers the opportunity to see missed episodes of their favorite shows, it has replaced one of the roles formerly attributed to network reruns. Despite VCRs and cable, however, this peculiar programming practice continues to exist and currently accounts for over forty percent of the networks' prime-time annual schedule. Hence, it is still interesting to examine the role that reruns play in network programming strategies and the profile of audience that appreciates such programs.

History of Network Reruns

With the original episode "in the can," commercial networks could replay/reuse these programs during the 13 week summer months when households using television reached its lowest level. In this way, networks could save production costs of new episodes (unseen by the vast majority of households) by amortizing the sunk economic costs of existing episodes across more than one play. This

strategy was not totally without cost since the networks had to pay residuals (roughly 25% of original costs) to the "above the line" creative talent who produced the original show. At first, this cost cutting measure was instituted on a 1:3 basis (1 rerun for every 3 original) but as time progressed this practice became more prevalent, and the rerun season was extended to include the late spring months. The corresponding ratio became 1:1 as the number of original episodes shrunk from 39 to 26 to 22 (21, 17).

Rerun capability also created the opportunity for local stations (and international markets) to reuse these episodes in non-network hours through the syndication industry, thereby promising additional financial returns to program producers and residuals for creative contributors. A strong syndication industry meant better programming for independents, especially during the prime-time access and fringe hours, permitting them to have deeper pockets to counter-program the network offerings during all time periods.

Rerun Limitations

According to Owen, Beebe and Manning (21) and Litman (16), during prime time in the 70s, the networks followed a common rerun strategy in terms of number and scheduling. Without significant competition from other programming sources, the American viewing public was given the choice of watching or not. The notions of reruns and spring and summer programming became inextricably intertwined to the extent that some would ask whether the reason households using TV was so low was due to alternative leisure time activities or distaste for reruns. The problem was more clearly focused when the FCC undertook a rulemaking with a suggested limitation of 25% reruns during the prime-time hours (6).

During the Proceedings, the networks argued that reruns were an economic

"good" rather than a "bad"--permitting many viewers the opportunity to see programs they missed when first broadcast. Reruns also provided a profit cushion which permitted all three networks to survive and cross-subsidize costly new program development. Finally, such a ceiling on reruns would so severely impact on network profits that they would have to curtail their program production budgets which meant an eventual lowering of program quality. Furthermore, "newness" is not necessarily synonymous with originality or creativity. The FCC eventually decided not to intervene in the rerun controversy and abandoned the rulemaking (6).

Prior to the unexpected rise of ABC during the 1975 season, CBS and NBC, #1 and #2, respectively, had approximately 60% original and 40% reruns across their entire prime-time year[1] (17). The sudden ascendency of ABC to the top network position triggered an intense programming war between the networks leading to an increase in original programming (and decrease in rerun programming) by the networks. Industry discipline completely broke down as CBS and NBC increased their percentage of original programming by 6-8% (17). By the 1980s CBS and NBC were once again on top but the world of television had changed completely with the strong in-roads of cable and pay-cable in the early 1980s and the rise of independents and the VCR revolution shortly thereafter. A new disequilibrium occurred, and the networks would no longer have the captive market they once enjoyed.

Current Status of Network Reruns

The interesting question is how would the networks respond to their new

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[1]ABC was always permitted to "cheat" on the cartel by having a higher percentage of original programming, roughly 68-69%. This was considered a form of compensation to ABC to insure their cooperation in other areas of interaction (21).

competitors. Would they once again reduce their reliance on reruns as a means of combatting the new program offerings of cable? The answer is "No!" From 1980-85, the percentage of original programming stabilized at about 62% for CBS, 60% for NBC and 66% for ABC. Evidently, the marginal profits from "rerunning" continued to exceed the marginal losses from lower market shares. By now, reruns were not unique to network television; even new cable networks, like HBO, CNN and ESPN repeat their offerings.

Most recently during the 1988 season, the writers' strike over residuals in subsidiary markets forced the networks to substitute reruns for new fall programming and contributed to the lowest aggregate network share of audience in their history, even during an Olympic year. The cable programmers took advantage of the network vulnerability through successful counterprogramming strategies. Can the networks maintain this rerun strategy in the face of widespread competition and with the omnipresent VCR? More appropriately, does it still make sense? It is within this context that a fresh assessment of rerun audiences becomes so important.

Literature Review

Past Research

Much of the research on program choice, particularly that of Webster and Wakshlag (29, 30), takes a socio-economic approach to audience viewing. Basically, they believe that the other available options for one's leisure time are preeminent over television viewing. Specific program choice is then explained as the end result of a conglomeration of forces, beginning with the individual being "available" and including such interacting variables as the structure of program options (with cable, the options could be over 100), program type

preference, viewer needs, program awareness and the context of viewing.

Others have also been interested in why viewers watch certain programs. For example, Comstock (3) proposed that people first decide when to watch and then decide what to watch. He suggested that people were passive in their decision on when but much more active on deciding what. In his research on leisure, Tannenbaum (24) suggests that viewers want familiarity, perhaps the assurance or near assurance that the time invested is not wasted--again an economic consideration. This could be a driving force as to why some individuals will watch the rerun of a program they have already seen if they enjoyed the program the first time.

Audience Duplication

Audience duplication is recognized as one of the major components in program choice models and a fundamental aspect in understanding network programming strategies and viewing patterns. In its simplest form, audience duplication is the percentage of those who watch program "X" who also watch program "Y" regardless of different channels or nights (27). However, it becomes most meaningful as a strategic programming decision in one of the following forms:

1. "Inheritance effect" or lead-in effect is the contribution of the immediately preceding program to the audience of a given program on the same day and the same channel.
2. "Repeat viewing" is the viewing of successive episodes of a program series, usually daily, stripped programs but also prime-time weekly programs.
3. "Repeated exposure" is the viewing of the same episode of the same program.

Of the three, repeated exposure is the form most relevant to the present research.

Inheritance Effects

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of audience duplication research has focused on inheritance effects. As hypothesized and expected, previous studies

have found that lead-in share/rating is highly (and positively) correlated with a program's share/rating. The overall share correlations have ranged from .49 (25) to .69 (26) and, when lead-in rating was used, the correlation turned out to be .82 (27).[2] Inheritance effects have also been found to be related to the number of other factors. For example, both Tiedge and Ksobiech (25) and Webster (27) found an inverse relationship between number of program options and inheritance effects. These authors, as well as Walker (26), found that inheritance effects are higher when the lead-in program and the program itself are of the same program type, particularly if the program type is a situation comedy. Walker (26) discovered that inheritance effects decrease as VCR penetration and remote control units increase, as one might expect. However, he also found that inheritance effects seem to have unexpectedly increased along with cable penetration--a finding explained by the loss of video adventurers to cable and the retention of a more "conservative" audience.

Repeat Viewing

Repeat viewing has likewise been widely studied (1, 2, 14). Looking at daily, stripped programs, Kamerer et al. (14) found an average day-to-day repeat viewing rate of 66% and also discovered that repeat viewing was higher for higher rated programs, lending support to McPhee's "Law of Double Jeopardy" (19) that lower rated programs have both fewer "initial buyers," less commitment and, consequently, lower repeat viewing levels. These authors also noticed that repeat viewing differed according to program type (i.e., 10% higher for soaps and 10% lower for talk shows), was affected by network affiliation (70% for network

[2] Share has been used in more recent literature to avoid the possible confounding effect with and to control for audience "availability," one of Webster and Wakshlag's proposed independent variables in their theory of program choice (29).

affiliate vs. 54% for an independent), and was fairly constant as the number of days between showings increased (72% for one day apart and 68% for 6 days apart). Interesting is their finding that viewers available on successive nights showed extreme program loyalty by watching over 90% of the repeated shows. They concluded by reaffirming Comstock's observation about factors motivating television viewing:

> The decision to view is usually passive and determined by exogenous factors (such as availability, influence of the viewing group, etc.) most of the time. However, the decision of what to view is strongly guided by viewing preferences for specific programs, with some variation by program type and channels...Viewers do watch programs they are familiar with and like, when they can. (14, p. 11)

Barwise et al. (2) found the average repeat viewing for daily stripped programs to be 53%, that soaps had a higher repeat viewing rate (by about 10%), and that network affiliation affected repeat viewing (network average = 50%; independents = 30%). Looking at age groups, they also found that repeat viewing was lower for kids and teens. One very important finding was that heavy TV viewers were somewhat more regular in their repeat-viewing of day-to-day programming.

In a follow-up study, Barwise (1) examined prime-time, week-to-week programming during the 1982-1984 period using data obtained from a variety of commercial rating services. The range of results for repeat viewing was 23% for "First Camera" to 67% for "Dallas" and "Knots Landing." He found that the repeat viewing level for the night time soaps was on average 10 points higher than for other series and that the higher the program rating, the higher the prpensity for repeat viewing. Hence, there is considerable consistency in the findings across most of these repeat viewing studies, regardless of the daypart examined.

Repeated Exposure

On the other hand, very little research has been done on "repeated exposure," where an individual rewatches the same episode of a program--an area of extreme interest to the networks, all television stations who run syndicated shows, and the advertising community. Most prominent is the research done by Tannenbaum (24) who has studied cross-border viewing habits, particularly between Canada and the United States. In this type of environment, a viewer could view a prime-time program the week it was originally shown in the United States and then one week later when it was re-broadcast in Canada. He cited one study done in Toronto that found that 40% of the audience for a prime-time episode of "Rhoda" had just seen the same episode 4 days earlier, even though there were at least ten other program options.

Tannenbaum's research also included an experimental laboratory setup whereby Green Bay Packer football fans and non-football fans could choose to watch a live football game, a replay of the famous Packers 1967 championship game, or two other nonsports programs. Results indicated that virtually all football fans chose a football game, one-third choosing the replay of the championship game. In a similar atmosphere, Tannenbaum connected a bicycle to a television set and made it the energy source for television viewing. Subjects could pedal to see an episode of "Kojak" they had been shown 2-3 weeks earlier. Ninety-five percent of the participants chose to pedal to see the episode again.

To summarize, Tannenbaum believes that a certain group (minority) of television viewers are devotees of programs and repeatedly watch reruns of these shows while another more adventuresome group would rather experiment with new and unfamiliar program forms and new technologies. For expositional purposes, we could construct a continuum for TV viewing. At each extreme would be these

radical groups of viewers--those who only watch familiar programming and never experiment and those completely lacking program loyalty ties who search for the most exciting program available.[3] Heeter and Greenberg (12) have profiled this latter group of channel changers or "grazers" as people who rarely plan their channel selection process or systematically check TV Guide beforehand. These are people who are "more creatures of chance than habit," who are less likely to watch stripped shows and more likely to watch shows they rarely see. Interestingly, these viewers often pay less attention to the television programs, often using them as a background source for other household activities (12).

It is, of course, unrealistic to expect people to uniformly conform to these extremes, but certainly possible that some viewers might lean heavily in one direction or another and reasonable to expect that everyone would exhibit these forms of behavior at different times (or for certain favorite programs like "Mash," "The Honeymooners," or "Star Trek"). After all, most consumers exhibit such repeat purchasing behavior with at least a certain number of branded consumer goods. While previous research into inheritance and repeat viewing effects have partially explored "this search for familiarity," no research has systematically sought to measure the extreme case of seeking familiarity and redundancy by watching rerun episodes of series which were shown several months before.[4]

After first operationalizing two groups, the frequent rerun viewers and the

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[3]These program voyagers are not the same as Paul Klein's viewers of an earlier epoch, who sought the "least objectionable program" within a specific time frame rather than turn off their set.

[4]One difficulty with examining actual viewership of reruns of specific network programs is the necessity of bridging several time periods (i.e., when the original episode was first shown and then its repeat showing). Since diary based "sweeps" data rotates households between sample periods, only electronically monitored "household" viewing can measure the rerun phenomenom. This problem should be alleviated with the people meter national sample which is large, stable and broken down according to personal demographics.

infrequent rerun viewers, the groups will be contrasted on various demographic characteristics, television viewing behavior and other media habits. Of particular interest will be whether those who seek rerun familiarity engage in similar behavioral practices in considering other media through constant replays of favorite records, videotapes and the like. Similarly, do those who experiment with television programming seek novelty and adventure in other telecommunication appliance purchase decisions and other aspects of their lives?

Methodology

The survey was mailed to 730 residents in a medium-sized midwestern market during a three day period in late July, 1986. A stamped, addressed return envelope was provided with each survey. The addresses were randomly chosen from the spring area-wide telephone directory; business addresses were purposely excluded. No attempt was made to mark or identify the questionnaires in any way; hence, true anonymity was preserved. One week after the last day of the original mailing, a reminder postcard was sent to all of the households.

Forty-seven of the original 730 surveys were returned as being undeliverable,[5] leaving an original base of 683 households contacted. Two hundred and ninety seven completed surveys were returned for a response rate of 43.5%. According to the NAB newsletter "Info-Pak" (June 1988), this response rate is almost identical to the 42-43% rate of A.C. Nielsen and Arbitron for their July TV "sweeps." The overwhelming preponderance of surveys were returned in the two weeks following the initial mailing. Four of the returned surveys were

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[5]Each of the original envelopes had the phrase "If undeliverable, please return to sender." This would permit the subtraction of these households from the base of original households contacted. This procedure is equivalent to not counting "wrong numbers" in a comparable telephone survey.

incorrectly filled out or had a large number of unanswered questions and were rejected. Consequently, there were 293 usable questionnaires--42.9% of the adjusted base of households contacted.

Profile of the Sample

In terms of access to new telecommunication and computer "appliances," the sampled households had a higher penetration rate during the 1986 time frame than the national averages for cable and pay-cable subscribership and for ownership of personal computers yet comparable rates for ownership of VCRs and compact discs. This affluence is probably attributed to their higher household income at $31,255, higher educational achievement levels (nearly four years of college) and higher proportion in prestige occupations.

With respect to the respondents who actually filled out the questionnaires, there was a higher than normal proportion of white, older and females. These are typical problems that accompany all survey research but could not be corrected because of the one-wave nature of the survey design.[6] It should further be noted that because of lack of space, the questionnaire did not seek information about marital status, family size, or the nature of the TV viewing experience (e.g., group viewing). Previous research into repeat viewing has not discovered any links between repeat viewing and variables of this kind.

More important was information about the level of TV viewing and other media consumption. The typical respondent reported viewing 15-20 hours per week (less than Nielsen's average), renting 1-2 videos a month, reading 10-14 books per year, playing 6 records or audiotapes per week and having 3 to 4 hobbies.

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[6]A weighting scheme will be used in the estimation procedures to compensate for the higher than expected percentage of female respondents. They will be weighted to the national average of 52%.

By definition, a person is not counted as having watched a rerun unless he/she has previously watched the original episode. Since the purpose of this study is to identify and explain the viewing behavior of those persons who frequently watch reruns, one simply cannot compare the rating of a series during its original run and rerun season to answer this question of program loyalty. It is possible that a significant number of viewers of the program during its rerun telecast may be watching it for the first time. These viewers are thus original rather than repeat viewers. Because of this strict definition, the larger the base of original viewers, the greater the potential for repeat viewing.

Due to the sample size, it was necessary to find programs which would likely be watched by many individuals the first time the program was broadcast. Because of this sampling and the statistical bias against low-rated network programs, the pilot study limited the sample of programs to those ranked in the top 20 for the 1985-86 TV season. The sample was further limited to 10 programs because of the nature of the mail questionnaire and the desire to keep it relatively short. Accordingly, 6 of the top 10 were purposely included.[7] An attempt was then made to mix program days, times, networks,[8] and, to some extent, ratings for those remaining four programs which had run the entire season. The programs used are

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[7]"Dynasty" (#6) and "Dallas" (#7) were not included because these two long-running serials typically have 28 rather than the standard 22 original episodes, are often preempted during the late spring and early summer months and thus do not have normal rerun seasons like other prime-time series. The same longer season is true for "60 Minutes" (#4) which additionally often intermixes new segments with rerun segments from prior seasons. Hence, it was also excluded from the sample of 10 shows. On the other hand, "Knot's Landing" (another serial) behaves like other prime-time shows in its rerun offerings.

[8]Two of the programs were necessarily chosen from programs ranked between #21 and #30. Because of NBC's dominance during this season (5 of the top 10 and 13 of the top 30 programs), the shows sampled do favor NBC although one doubts the general validity of network loyalty other than for inheritance effects in a single night.

given in Table 1.

Attitudinal Responses

Respondents were asked on a 5 point scale (5=very often...3=sometimes... 1=never) how often they watched these 10 programs and, most critically, how often they watched rerun episodes of these shows.[9] The percentages of respondents who answered that they watched original and that watched rerun episodes "very often" or "often" are also given in Table 1. Two factors are clear from this table. First, the percentage of frequent viewers is very highly correlated to the national rating, with the exception of "Scarecrow and Mrs. King" and "Hotel,"[10] indicating that the local area sample closely corresponds to the national audience. Second, those who frequently view original episodes also report that they frequently view repeated episodes. [11] For example, 47.1% of the sample frequently watched "The Cosby Show" and 33.1% watched reruns of that program while only 9.9% frequently watched "Hotel" and 3.7% frequently watched reruns of this show. This is consistent with McPhee's "Law of Double Jeopardy" and previous

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[9]Respondents in our sample were also asked a series of attitudinal questions concerning their overall satisfaction with summer TV programming and their opinions of reruns, those who were generally dissatisfied with summer TV programming: (a) found reruns boring, (b) would watch more summer programming were there fewer reruns, (c) disagreed that reruns provide a chance to catch up on missed episodes, and (d) disagreed that reruns are a necessary part of the TV landscape.

[10]A subsequent check of local-area sweeps data for 1986 indicates that "Scarecrow" was one of the most popular network shows in this market, with an average local rating 25% higher than the national average while "Hotel" had a particularly poor showing in this market with local ratings less than half the national average.

[11]Great caution should be used in interpreting this correlation since there may be confusion between frequent viewers of a program and repeat viewers of the same program. In other words, the latter category is undoubtedly included in the former. For this reason, the category of frequent viewers will not be used in the regression equations as an independent variable due to endogeneity.

Table 1

Sample Programs and Frequency of Viewing*

Prime-Time Program	Rank	Final Season Rating	Network	Day	Time	% Freq. Viewers	% Rerun Viewers
"The Cosby Show" (C)	#1	34.0%	NBC	Th.	8:00	47.1%	33.3%
"Family Ties" (C)	#2	30.5	NBC	Th.	8:30	35.8	23.9
"Murder She Wrote" (M)	#3	25.3	CBS	Sun.	8:00	38.7	17.1
"Golden Girls" (C)	#7	21.8	NBC	Sat.	9:00	28.8	14.7
"Miami Vice" (P)	#8	21.3	NBC	Fri.	10:00	16.6	10.2
"Who's the Boss?" (C)	#10	21.1	ABC	Tu.	8:00	16.2	6.8
"Highway To Heaven" (D)	#14	20.4	NBC	Wed.	8:00	14.4	8.6
"Knot's Landing" (D)	#18	19.5	CBS	Th.	10:00	17.4	6.5
"Hotel" (D)	#22	18.4	ABC	Wed.	10:00	9.9	3.7
"Scarecrow & Mrs. King" (AA/C)	#28	17.4	CBS	Mon.	8:00	23.7	9.5

Key: C=comedy; M=mystery/suspense; P=police drama; D=drama; AA/C=action adventure/comedy

*Percentage of viewers who watch the program "very often" or "often" and percentage of viewers who watch reruns of the program "very often" or "often."

studies on program loyalty showing this positive relationship.

Operationalization of Variables

For statistical analysis, the dependent variable of viewers who "frequently" watch rerun programs was operationalized by two different formulations. The first was a count of the number of rerun programs that respondents indicated as having watched "very often" or "often." This variable resulted in a range of 0-7, with a mean of 1.334 and a standard deviation of 1.619. This low of a mean illustrates that frequent rerun viewers are definitely a minority of the sample. In fact, nearly half (47.4%) of the respondents indicated that there were none of the 10 programs of which they frequently watched reruns. The second operationalization variable is a slight variation of the first. Here, respondents were categorized into frequent rerun viewers or not (a binary formulation) according to whether they watched reruns of two or more of the 10 shows "very often" or "often." Only 112 of the 293 respondents (38.2%) fit this definition. These results are roughly similar to a recent study by A.C. Nielsen showing that only 21% of the audience for network reruns had previously seen the original episode ("Prime Time Repeats, Prime Time Repeats," Nielsen Media Research, 1989).

The independent variables can be separated into three general groupings according to: respondent media habits and attitudes, household characteristics and demographics. Where possible and meaningful, an attempt was made to incorporate variables reflecting the collective findings of previous research studies on various forms of the audience duplication phenomena. In the first category are variables reflecting the amount of TV viewed, satisfaction with summer TV offerings, viewing of diverse "basic" cable channels and "unusual" non-prime-time

programs,[12] the number of books read, VCRs rented, and records played.

It should be recalled from prior research that the concepts of program ratings (popularity) and viewer "availability" were major explanations for understanding repeat viewing (1, 2, 14, 27, 29). As explained above (see footnote 10), due to a definitional problem, the concept of viewer "availability" cannot be disentangled from frequency of viewing original and rerun episodes of the ten prime-time programs in the sample without sampling respondents at each possible viweing to see if they were available. We can only hope that the variable reflecting hours of TV viewed per week acts as a gross measure of people's availability to watch TV in general and spring and summer reruns in particular. A better refinement of this concept awaits further research using people meter rather than attitudinal data.

Corresponding to previous research, the study was able to operationalize variables concerning ownership and use of new telecommunication appliances, including cable, pay-cable, personal computers, compact discs. Furthermore, due to the limited number of prime-time programs used, it was only possible to break the sample into two subcategories; comedies and non-comedies. Consistent with earlier research, comedies appeared to have a somewhat larger number of frequent rerun viewers, but the differences were not great and probably attributable to ratings popularity as much as program type, since "Cosby," "Family Ties," and "Golden Girls" were three of the top four rated programs and the source of the greatest number of avid rerun viewers.

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[12]The variable, "basic" cable viewer was operationalized by counting the number of basic channels watched "very often" or "often" from among: MTV, ESPN, FNN,CNN, USA and C-SPAN. The variable, "unusual" TV viewer (i.e., someone with wide-ranging tastes) was operationalized by counting the number of non-prime-time programs watched in the last three months from among: "ABC's Wide World of Sports," "David Letterman Show," "McNeil-Lehrer Newshour," "Masterpiece Theater," "Saturday Night Live," and "This Week with David Brinkley."

In searching for the concept of familiarity, frequent rerun viewers would probably be those who watch a lot of television in general, are somewhat satisfied with summer programming, yet would feel uncomfortable subscribing to or frequently experimenting with "basic," pay-cable or "unusual" TV offerings. Furthermore, it is unlikely that these unidimensional and "media conservative" people would have interest in many hobbies or frequently use other media such as playing records or renting VCR tapes, although they might own a VCR to record favorite TV programs for time-shift playing. Carrying this theme further, we would not expect these people to be early adopters or avid users of new telecommunication and computer appliances such as PCs. In general, they have less propensity to experiment with new ideas.

In terms of personal characteristics, avid rerun viewers can be expected to be older people who are more set in their ways, with less college education and correspondingly low income levels, less job mobility and long-time community ties. Since women and minorities are known to watch a greater amount of television in general (20), these demographics could also be related to rerun viewing via an interaction with the overall TV viewing variable. Of course, the opposite of these expectations should hold for those who infrequently watch reruns and have been labelled as program adventurers.

Results

The results of the statistical analyses are presented in Tables 2-4. Because the sample underrepresented men, a weighting scheme adjusting gender responses to the national average was used to give additional importance to the responses of men and to correspondingly reduce the dominance of women. As can be seen, weighting the sample in this manner changed very few of the relationships.

According to the simple correlations given in Table 2, only a handful of the a priori expectations ring true and are significant at the 5% level for one or both of the dependent variables.[13] The highest correlations (in the .21-.27 range) are for variables reflecting TV viewership, education and income, and gender (women). As expected, those who frequently view television have a greater availability to watch more of all programs, including reruns. This concept of viewer availability appears to be a glue binding together a whole series of studies of different television program forms including such unlikely bedfellows as religious television (7), TV news (28), cable television in general (15) and MTV (22) in particular, although there does not appear to be significant overall television viewing differences between basic and pay-cable subscribers or among pay-cable subscribers (9,23).[14]

Not surprisingly, those who are dissatisfied with summer TV programming watch fewer reruns than those who are satisfied while those with college educations or high incomes also watch less reruns. These people apparently would rather search for greater variety and diversity of television offerings. Hence, in a sense, reruns can be considered in the economic category of "inferior" goods for these TV "grazers." The same analysis seems to hold true for men. Similarly, those respondents who have a lot of hobbies and/or watch a wide variety of unusual TV and cable offerings have less affinity for reruns while those who have remained at their current jobs for a number of years tend to be associated with frequent

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[13] While these results are disappointing, it should be recalled that simple correlations may reflect compound relationships with offsetting positive and negative impacts and inter-correlations to other variables. Only after these impacts are partialled out through a higher statistical test will many of the true relationships be revealed.

[14] In another related study in the book (chapter 16), Greenberg et al. found no significant difference between subscribers to Playboy, Disney, HBO and Cinemax in terms of hours of overall television watched.

Table 2

Correlational Analysis[#]

Dependent Variables

Independent Variables[&]	No. of Frequent Reruns Watched*		Have Frequently Watched At Least 2 Reruns**	
	Unweighted	Weighted	Unweighted	Weighted
Not satisfied with TV	-.108	-.090	-.117[a]	-.107
Subscribe to Cable	-.029	-.029	-.017	-.029
Subscribe to Pay-Cable	.074	-.089	.054	.069
Watch "Basic" Services	-.012	.015	-.005	.010
Own a PC	-.088	-.106	-.081	-.093
Own a CD	-.042	-.064	-.018	-.048
Own a VCR	.085	.090	.115	.120[a]
No. of Records	-.075	-.090	-.065	-.085
Records Played/week	.031	.012	.063	.041
Black	.076	.057	.046	.031
Frequently views TV	.249[c]	.266[c]	.210[c]	.235[c]
College Education	-.232[c]	-.248[c]	-.213[c]	-.231[c]
Women	.232[c]	.243[c]	.242[c]	.254[c]
Age	.016	.027	-.025	-.009
Same Residence	.009	.007	.020	.017
Income	-.212[c]	-.214[c]	-.181[b]	-.185[b]
Same Job	-.090	-.077	-.121[a]	-.107
No. of Hobbies	-.098	-.111	-.057	-.075
Frequently Rent VCRs	.013	-.000	.050	.036
No. of Books Read	-.019	-.008	.017	.018
Watch "unusual" TV shows	-.072	-.077	-.093	-.101

Weighting: Gender variable weighted by .824 for women; 1.30 for men.

[#]Pearson Product Moment for interval data; point-biserial for binary independent and interval dependent; phi for binary dependent variable.
*The number of rerun programs (out of 10) which were watched "very often" or "often."
**Whether respondent watched two or more rerun programs "very often" or "often."
[&]The sample size n for each correlation ranges from 266-293, depending on the number of missing cases. Only "Same Job" is below this range with n=233.
[a]Significant at $\alpha = .05$ for a 2-tail test.
[b]Significant at $\alpha = .01$ for a 2-tail test.
[c]Significant at $\alpha = .001$ for a 2-tail test.

rerun viewing.

These results are broadly consistent with profiles of TV "zappers" and basic cable subscribers. According to Heeter and Greenberg (12), males are far more active channel changers than women and basic cable subscribers engage in more program orienting searches than the uncabled. The younger generation is similarly more active than the older, but only "minimal differences were discovered between income and educational groupings, between married and even by household size" (12, p. 70). In the LaRose and Atkin national study of basic cable subscribers (15), among other things, they could differentiate subscribers from non-subscribers by age (younger), marital status (married) and by household size as well as owning a VCR[15] and engaging in heavy newspaper reading. Both religious television and MTV viewers tend to be overwhelmingly female and less educated, but, not surprisingly, the former is dominated by older viewers while the latter is primarily programmed for the under 30 age group (7,22).

Two higher level statistical analyzes were then performed on the dependent variables: a multiple regression analysis was used in connection with the semi-continuous variable, "number of frequent reruns watched," and a discriminant analysis was used with the binary dependent variable, "have frequently watched at least 2 reruns." Great care was exercised in these estimations to insure that independent explanatory variables were not inter-correlated. To this end, it was necessary to combine the variable, "count of 'basic' cable channels used frequently" with number of "unusual programs watched in the last 3 months" to form the new variable entitled "diversity" (see footnote 11). None of the ten independent variables used in the "best fit" estimations given in Tables 3 and 4

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[15]Greenberg et al. discovered that basic cable subscribers also had an affinity for other telecommunication items.

Table 3

Multiple Regression Analysis

Dependent Variable is Number of Frequent Reruns Watched*

	Unweighted		Weighted	
Independent Variables	Beta	T	Beta	T
Not Satisfied with Summer TV&	-.126	-2.027[a]	-.099	-1.627[a]
Women&	.214	3.346[c]	.226	3.581[c]
Number of Hobbies	-.139	-2.253[b]	-.146	-2.402[b]
Heavy TV Viewer&	.250	4.019[c]	.251	4.113[c]
Own a PC&	-.104	-1.698[a]	-.110	-1.830[a]
Own a VCR&	.128	2.001[a]	.134	2.123[a]
No. of Records Played	.126	2.006[a]	.103	1.670[a]
Diversity'	-.124	-1.929[a]	-.114	-1.799[a]
College Education&	-.080	-1.222	-.115	-1.816[a]
Income	-.131	-1.981[a]	-.105	-1.613[a]

Summary Statistics

Unweighted	Weighted
n = 219	n= 224
R^2=.258 Adjusted R^2=.222	R^2=.264 Adjusted R^2=.229
Overall F=7.227 Sign. =.000	Overall F=7.636 Sign.= .000

Weighting: Gender variable weighted by .824 for women; 1.30 for men.

*The number of programs (out of 10) which were watched "very often" or "often."
&Binary Variable (1 = yes, 0 = no).
[a]Significant at α = .05 for a 1-tail test.
[b]Significant at α = .01 for a 1-tail test.
[c]Significant at α = .001 for a 1-tail test.

Table 4

Discriminant Analysis

Dependent Variable: Have Frequently Watched At Least 2 Reruns*&

Independent Variables	Unweighted Coefficients#	F@	Weighted Coefficients#	F@
Women&	.519	12.982	.535	14.815
Income	-.283	3.530	-.214	2.137
Not Satisfied with Summer TV	-.275	3.647	-.236	2.867
Own a VCR&	.336	5.046	.348	5.738
Diversity	-.265	3.131	-.269	3.478
Hobbies	-.271	3.542	-.284	4.164
Own a PC&	-.234	2.721	-.226	2.679
College Education&	-.164	1.208	-.237	2.793
No. of Records Played	.327	4.993	.273	3.675
Heavy TV Viewer	.518	13.434	.521	14.742

Summary Statistics

Unweighted	Weighted
n = 219 Eigenvalue = .325	n = 224 Eigenvalue = .343
Canononical Correlation = .495	Canononical Correlation = .505
Wilk's Lambda = .755	Wilk's Lambda = .745
Chi-Square = 59.70	Chi-Square = 63.97
Degrees of Freedom = 10	Degrees of Freedom = 10
Significance = .000	Significance = .000
Percent of Grouped Cases Correctly Classified = 72.85	Percent of Grouped Cases Correctly Classified = 73.58

Weighting: Gender variable weighted by .824 for women; 1.30 for men.

*Whether respondent watched two or more programs "very often" or "often."
&Binary Variable (1 = yes, 0 = no).
#Standardized Canononical Discriminant Function Coefficients.
@F to Remove.

had inter-correlations above .26 and hence could truly be considered empirically independent. A mixed hierarchical and stepwise estimation technique was used to arrive at the final group of independent variables, which appear to fairly represent the initial groupings of demographics, household characteristics, media habits and attitudes.

One immediately notices striking similarities between these two estimation procedures in terms of closeness of fit, strength and relative contributions of the (same) independent variables. The findings are also consistent with those mentioned above in the correlational analysis. For example, the strongest contributing variables in each equation are "heavy TV viewing" and being a woman, both of which had the highest correlations in Table 2. Other variables noted as having strong zero order correlations such as income, "not being satisfied with summer TV," and owning a VCR carry over intact to the multivariate analyses while college education does not. In an effort to test the unidimensionality of a rerun viewer, new variables were introduced into the multivariate analyses, including ownership of a PC, number of hobbies and number of records played. While PC ownership has the expected negative relationship to rerun viewing, record playing has a positive sign, indicating that it is a complementary activity rather than a substitute for rerun viewing.

The adjusted R^2 of .22 is a reasonable statistical fit for individual social science survey data of this sort as are the corresponding values for the unweighted discriminant analysis--eigenvalue of .325, canononical correlation of .495,[16] Wilk's Lambda of .755 and percent of grouped cases correctly classified of

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[16]One can interpret the square of the canononical correlation as the proportion of variance in the discriminant function that is explained by the groups. Here, $.495^2$ yields 24.50 percent explained variance which is close to the R^2 value in the regression equation.

72.85. Future research incorporating psychographics, better measures of viewer availability and a more representative sample of programs should yield even more precise statistical fits.

In terms of the profile of frequent rerun viewers presented above, the multivariate analyses add very little new information. Those so inclined tend to be women, owners of VCRs (to presumably tape delay their favorite shows), frequent players of records, and heavy TV consumers while those not so oriented tend to be high income, men, those who are not satisfied with traditional network summer TV offerings and those who engage in alternative activities, including hobbies and owning a personal computer. When these people watch television, they do not cling to the familiar surroundings of rerun programming, but like video adventurers, search the landscape of cable and regular television for a wide assortment of programming.[17]

Conclusions and Recommendations

The economic plight of the historic television networks continues to worsen as each new television season unfolds. Facing a flat network advertising market and with rising program costs, profit margins are becoming even more compressed. With steadily climbing cable and satellite dish penetration and enhanced program competition from a united independent television sector and a dozen or so mature basic and premium cable networks, the scenario for a reversal of their fate seems

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[17]To further test the robustness of these results, a new dependent variable labelled, "infrequent rerun viewer" was constructed; it was exactly opposite to the dependent variable in Table 3, being defined as the number of sample programs of which respondents report as "never" or "rarely" having viewed reruns. The regression estimation results are consistent (though opposite in sign) with those reported above with only a few differences. For example, the pay-cable variable now becomes an important predictor variable while income and "diversity" are significant only at the liberal 10% level.

less than promising.[18]

On the other hand, consumers are now armed with new viewing devices like VCRs, remote control tuners and addressable converters which free them from the carefully planned programming schedules of the network architects and permit them access to an astounding number and variety of program choices. Old programming theories based on a scarce number of offerings and a passive, inert and almost drugged audience no longer seem meaningful and cannot be accepted as the standard catechism in this space-age jungle of programming abundance.

To find a product niche for themselves in this brave new world of television programming, the networks must concentrate their efforts on their areas of natural advantage and no longer attempt to serve every conceivable mass taste. To a great extent, this reevaluation has already begun. They have largely abandoned theatrical movies which have experienced a marked decline in network ratings in favor of made-for-television movies and have seen their absolute dominance of sports gradually whittled away by superstations and sports-oriented cable networks. The same conclusion could also be reached in the news area with the emergence of CNN.

To counter the effect of rising prices for prime-time entertainment shows, they have switched their reliance on high-priced action dramas in favor of lower-priced situation comedies and news/information programs.[19] These are, of course,

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[18]This may have been responsible for new interest on the part of NBC in co-venturing new cable TV program networks and alliances. ABC has continued to retain its position with ownership shares of such networks as ESPN, A & E and Lifetime.

[19]This may partially be traceable to the hostile reception that hour-long series have recently encountered in seeking syndication access. Such series as "Magnum" and "Dallas" performed well below expectations, thereby drying up the market for "Murder She Wrote" and "Cagney and Lacey." To encourage new series from prime-time packagers, it is very critical that the syndication market remain open and clear since this (rather than the network run) is the financial lure for

products which the networks have built up brand name loyalty with their viewers. Another relic of the past glory days will possibly be the network rerun.

In today's competitive climate, reruns are often seen by most viewers as being an inferior programming strategy except for the most highly select of all network programs. This conclusion is reinforced through their marginal performance in the off-network rerun syndication market, being overshadowed by first-run syndicated programming such as "Wheel of Fortune," "Jeopardy," and various talk show and wrestling programs. It is no accident that the most exciting new trend in syndication programming involves "tabloid"-type programming rather than off-network reruns. And while the aura of network reruns is surely diminishing, it is not in immediate jeopardy of becoming extinguished. There still remains a considerable group of non-VCR owners for whom reruns provide positive utility.

In the study at hand, only a minority of the sample households admitted to frequently watching reruns and then only of the most popular network programs. The typical rerun enthusiast can be characterized as a TV addict, set in his/her ways and satisfied with the status quo. These television "reactionaries," though scarce in number, nevertheless, are hard-core viewers who are intensely loyal to network television and are not easily discarded. Contrasted to these traditionalists are a new group of demographically attractive video adventurers who are willing to experiment with new technologies and devices in their quest for entertainment diversity. To some extent, these people have grown with the technologies themselves, and feel more comfortable with accessing them than the older generation of viewers who were weaned on the three network monopoly.

For researchers to understand these new technologies and associated

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such producers.

programming, they will have to construct multidimensional studies analyzing complex viewing patterns across all dayparts and utilize such new research sources as the people meter or remote sensing devices. Critically important will be developing theories predicting channel selection (11), viewer availability and strategic programming responses. Such concepts can no longer be assumed by researchers to be static and exogenously determined. A fresh look also is needed into the operation of the syndication market and its interrelationships with the commercial and cable networks and the process by which it reaches equilibrium. In the context of the rerun phenomenom, it is especially important to understand how viewers approach the syndication market and whether off-network aficionados differ from viewers of first-run syndication programming. Put in another context, can someone be addicted to "MASH" and "The Wheel of Fortune" simultaneously?

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